A SERMON

Lately Preached,

ON

1 CORINTH. 3. 15.

BY

A Reverend Divine of the Church of England.

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1. CORINTH. 3. 15.

But he himself shall be Saved, yet so as by Fire.

THE Context runs thus. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise Master-builder, I have laid the Foundation, and another Buildeth thereon: But let every man take heed how he Buildeth thereupon. For other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Now if any man Build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stubble, Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it; But it shall be revealed by Fire, and the Fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is.*

If any man's work abide which he hath Built thereupon, he ſhall receive a Reward. If any man's work ſhall be burnt, he ſhall ſuffer loſs; BUT HE HIMSELF SHAL BE SAVED, YET SO AS BY FIRE.

IN theſe Words the Apoſtle ſpeaks of a ſort of Perſons, who held indeed the Foundation of *Chriſtianity*, but Built upon it ſuch *Doctrines* or *Practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expreſſeth to us by *Wood*, *Hay*, and *Stubble*, which are not *proof* againſt the *Fire*. Such a perſon, the Apoſtle tells us, hath brought himſelf into a very dangerous ſtate, though he would not abſolutely deny the *poſſibility* of his Salvation; *He himſelf ſhal be ſaved, yet ſo as by Fire.*

That by *Fire* here, is not meant the Fire of *Purgatory*, as ſome pretend (who would be glad of any ſhadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I ſhall neither trouble you nor my ſelf to manifeſt.

It is very well known, that this is a Proverbial phraſe, uſed not only in Scripture, but in prophane Authors, to ſignifie *a narrow eſcape out of a great danger.* He ſhal be ſaved, yet ſo as by Fire, διὰ πυρὸς, *out of the Fire.* Juſt as δ' ὕδα-

τος

τῷ is uſed 1 Pet. 3. 20. where the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the eight perſons of *Noah's* family, who eſcap'd the Flood, διεσώθησαν δι' ὕδατος, they eſcaped *out of the Water.* So here this phraſe is to be rendred in the Text, *He himſelf ſhall eſcape, yet ſo as out of the Fire.* The like expreſſion you have, *Amos* 4. 11. *I have pluckt them as a firebrand, out of the Fire.* And *Jude* 23. *Others Save with fear, plucking them out of the Fire.* All which expreſſions ſignifie the greatneſs of the danger, and the difficulty of eſcaping it. And ſo the *Roman* Orator * (who, it is likely did not think of *Purgatory*,) uſeth this phraſe; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit*; From which Judgment or Sentence he eſcaped naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the *Greek* Orators * tells us, That, *to Save a man out of the Fire, was a common proverbial ſpeech.* And thus St. *Chryſoſtom* interprets this very place, He ſhall eſcape as one that eſcapes out of the Fire, that is, (ſaith he) *as one who when his houſe at midnight is ſet on fire, wakes and leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him, but imploying his whole care to Save his body from the flames.*

* *Tully.*

* *Ariſtides.*

FROM the Words thus explained, the Obſervation that naturally ariſeth is this. *That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Chriſtian Religion, and yet may ſuperadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their Salvation.* What thoſe things were, which ſome among the *Corinthians* Built upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture, by what the Apoſtle reproves in this Epiſtle as the tolerating of *Inceſtious Marriages*, communicating in *Idol Feaſts*, &c. And eſpecially by the Doctrine of the falſe Apoſtles, who at that time did ſo much diſturb the peace of moſt Chriſtian Churches, and who are ſo often and ſo ſeverely reflected upon in this Epiſtle. And what their *Doctrine* was, we have an account *Acts* 15, *viz.* that they impoſed upon the *Gentile* Chriſtians, *Circumſion*, and *the obſervation of the* Jewiſh *Law*, teaching that *unleſs they were circumciſed and kept the Law of* Moſes. *they could not be ſaved.* So that they did not only Build theſe Doctrines upon *Chriſtianity*, but they made them equal with the *Foundation*, ſaying, That *unleſs men believed and practiſed ſuch things, they could not be Saved.*

I ſhall at this time take occaſion from this paſſage of the Apoſtles to conſider theſe two things.

1. Some *Doctrines* and *Practices*, which have been Built upon the *Foundation* of *Chriſtianity* to the great hazard and danger of mens *Salvation*; And, to be plain, I mean particularly, by the Church of *Rome*.

2. Whether our granting a *poſſibility* of Salvation (though with great hazard) to thoſe in the communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a reaſonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himſelf to that Church?

And there is the more reaſon to conſider theſe thiugs, when ſo many *ſeducing Spirits* are ſo active and buſie to pervert men from the *Truth*; and when we ſee every day ſo many *Perſons* and their *Religion* ſo eaſily parted. For this reaſon theſe two Conſiderations ſhall be the ſubject of the following Diſcourſe.

I. FIRST, We will conſider ſome *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the *Foundation* of *Chriſtianity*, to the great hazard and danger of mens *Salvation*. It is not denied

by the moſt judicious *Proteſtants*, but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith which are neceſſary to Salvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a juſt ground of our Separation from them, is, *the impoſing of new Doctrines and Practices upon Chriſtians, as neceſſary to Salvation*, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apoſtles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, or too apparently deſtructive of a good Life. And I begin,

1. WITH their *Doctrines*. And, becauſe I have no mind to aggravate leſſer matters, I will ſingle out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Chriſtian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, nor own'd in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity. And the

FIRST which I ſhall mention, and which being once admitted, makes way for as many Errors as they pleaſe to bring in, is this their *Doctrine of Infallibility*. And this they are very ſtiff and peremptory in, though they are not agreed among themſelves, where this *Infallibility* is ſeated; whether

whether in *the Pope alone*, or *a Council alone*, or *in both together*, or in *the diffusive body of Christians*; But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice against it? can any man think, that this *priviledge* was at first conferred upon the Church of *Rome* and that Christians in all Ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it, for the determining of differences, and yet that that very Church, which hath enjoyed and used it so long, should now be at a loss where to find it? Nothing could fall out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only Means of ending all differences.

There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this *priviledg* conferr'd upon the *Roman* Church; nor do the Apostles, in all their Epistles, ever so much as give the least direction to Christians to appeal to the Bishop of *Rome* for a determination of the many differences, which, even in those times, happen'd among them. And it is strange they should be so silent in this matter, when there were so many *occasions* to speak of it; if our Saviour had

plainly appointed ſuch an *infallible Judg* of Controverſies, for this very end, to decide the differences that ſhould happen among Chriſtians. It is ſtrange that the *Ancient Fathers*, in their diſputes with Hereticks, ſhould never appeal to *this Judg*; Nay it is ſtrange they ſhould not conſtantly do it, in all caſes, it being ſo ſhort and expedite a way for the ending of controverſies. And this very conſideration, to a wiſe man, is inſtead of a thouſand arguments to ſatisfie him that in thoſe times no ſuch thing was believed in the world.

Now this *Doctrine of Infallibility*, if it be not true, is of ſo much the more pernicious conſequence to Chriſtianity, becauſe the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of aſſuming an Authority to themſelves to impoſe their own fancies and miſtakes upon the whole Chriſtian world.

2. THEIR *Doctrine* about *Repentance*. Which conſiſts in confeſſing their Sins to the Prieſt; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *Contrition*, does, upon *Abſolution* received from the Prieſt, put them into a ſtate of *Salvation*, though

though they have lived the moſt lewd and debauched lives that can be imagin'd; than which nothing can be more deſtructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the moſt wicked man runs of his Salvation is, only the danger of ſo *ſudden a death*, as gives him no ſpace for Confeſſion and Abſolution. A caſe that happens ſo rarely, that any man that is ſtrongly addicted to his Luſts will be content to venture his Salvation upon this hazard; and all the Arguments to a good Life will be very inſignificant, to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when Remiſſion of Sins may be had upon ſuch cheap terms.

3. THE *Doctrine of Purgatory*. By which they mean a ſtate of Temporary Puniſhments after this Life, from which men may be Releaſed aud Tranſlated into Heaven, by the Prayers of the Living and the Sacrifice of the *Maſs*. That this Doctrine was not known in the Primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as Learned and Eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a Superſtructure upon the Chriſtian Religion. And though, in one

ſenſe, it be indeed a Building of *Gold* and *Silver* upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity, conſidering the vaſt Revenues which this Doctrine (and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it) brings in to that Church; yet I doubt not, but in the Apoſtles ſenſe, it will be found to be *Hay* and *Stubble*. But how groundleſs ſoever it be, it is too gainful a Doctrine to be eaſily parted withal.

4. THE *Doctrine* of *Tranſubſtantiation*. A hard word, but I would to God that were the worſt of it; the thing is much more difficult. I have taken ſome pains to conſider other Religions that have been in the World, and I muſt freely declare, that I never yet, in any of them, met with any Article or Propoſition, impoſed upon the belief of men, half ſo unreaſonable and hard to be believed as this is. And yet this, in the *Romiſh* Church, is eſteemed one of the moſt principal Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; though there is no more certain Foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviours being Subſtantially changed into all thoſe things which are ſaid of him, as that he is a Rock, a Vine, a Door, and a hundred other things.

But

But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not only *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge againſt it, namely, that it undermines the very Foundation of Chriſtianity itſelf. And ſurely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Chriſtian Doctrine*, which deſtroys the *reaſon* of our belief of the whole. And that this Doctrine does ſo will appear evidently, if we conſider what was the main Argument which the Apoſtles uſed to convince the World of the *truth of Chriſtianity*. And that was this; *That our Bleſſed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought ſuch and ſuch miracles, and particularly that he roſe again from the dead*; And this they proved, becauſe they were eye-witneſſes of his Miracles, and had ſeen him and converſed with him after he was riſen from the dead. But what if their ſenſes did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied, but that the main proof of Chriſtianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now ſuppoſe (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Tranſubſtantiation* to have been one principal part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which the Apoſtles preached. But if this Doctrine be true, then

then all mens Senſes are deceived in a plain ſenſible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived, as in any thing in the world; For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of Wafer, and the *whole Body* of a Man.

So that the Apoſtles perſwading men to believe this Doctrine, perſwaded them not to truſt their Senſes, and yet the Argument which they uſed to perſwade them to this was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens Senſes are to be truſted*; For if they be not, then notwithſtanding all the evidence the Apoſtles offer'd for the Reſurrection of our Saviour, he might not be riſen, and ſo the faith of Chriſtians was vain. So they that repreſent the Apoſtles as abſurdly as is poſſible, *viz.* going about to perſwade men out of their Senſes, by vertue of an Argument, the whole ſtrength whereof depends upon the certainty of Senſe.

And now the matter is brought to a fair iſſue. If the teſtimony of *Senſe* be to be relied upon, then *Tranſubſtantiation* is falſe: If it be not, then no man is ſure that Chriſtianity is true. For the utmoſt aſſurance that the Apoſtles had of the truth

of

of Christianity, was the testimony of their own Senses concerning our Saviours Miracles; and this Testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation*. From whence it plainly follows, That no man (no not the Apostles themselves) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Savior's Miracles (as the Apostles did) and have only a credible Relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the *truth* of *Christianity* than of the *falshood* of *Transubstantiation*.

But cannot God impose upon the Senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are? yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a Revelation; which *Assurance* no man can have, the certainty of Sense being taken away.

I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that these words, [*This is my Body*] if they be in Scripture, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal

literal ſenſe, I ask now, What greater evidence any man has, that theſe words [*This is my Body*] are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has ſo much; for we have only the evidence of *one* Senſe that theſe words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring Teſtimony of *ſeveral* of our ſenſes. In a word, if this be once admitted, that the *Senſes* of all men are deceiv'd in one of the moſt plain ſenſible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to Men; nor is there any way to confute the groſſeſt impoſture in the World: For if the clear evidence of all mens Senſes be not ſufficient for this purpoſe, let any man if he can find a better and more convincing Argument.

5. I WILL give but one inſtance more of their Doctrines. And that ſhall be, their *Doctrine* of *depoſing Kings*, in caſe of Hereſie, and Abſolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a meer *Speculative Doctrine*, but hath been put in Practice many a time by the Biſhops of *Rome*, as every one

one knows that is vers'd in Hiſtory. For the Troubles and Confuſions which were occaſion'd by this very thing make a good part of the Hiſtory of ſeveral Ages.

I hope no Body expects that I ſhould take the pains to ſhew, that this was not the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, nor of the Primitive Chriſtians. The *Papiſts* are many of them ſo far from pretending to this, that in ſome times and places, when it is not ſeaſonable and for their purpoſe, we have much a-doe to perſwade them that ever it was their Doctrine. But if *Tranſubſtantiation* be their Doctrine, *this* is; for they came both out of the ſame Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Tranſubſtantiation* was then eſtabliſh'd, ſo was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins, and brought forth at the ſame time, they are ſo like one another, that is, both ſo monſtrouſly unreaſonable.

II. I COME now in the *Second* place, to conſider ſome *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid, will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I ſhall inſtance in theſe Five.

1. Their

1. Their celebrating of their Divine Service *in an Unknown Tongue.* And that not only contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and design of Religious Worship, which is the Edification of those who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be Edified by what they do not understand) but likewise in direct contradiction to St. *Paul*, who hath no less than a whole Chapter, wherein he confutes this Practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly, as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this Practcie was not condemned by St. *Paul*, or that it was allowed and used in the first Ages of Christianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any Paradox in the world.

2. THE Communion *in one kind.* And that notwithstanding that even, by their own acknowledgement, our Saviour instituted it in Both kinds, and the Primitive Church administred it in Both kinds. This I must acknowledge is *no addition* to Christianity, but *a Sacrilegious taking away* of an Essential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as Essential a part

part of the Inſtitution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the ſame Authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. THEIR Worſhiping of *Images*. Which practice (notwithſtanding all their diſtinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* uſed in the ſame caſe) flies as full in the face of the *Second Commandment*, as a *deliberate* and *malicious killing* of a man is againſt the *Sixth*. But if the caſe be ſo plain, a man would think that at leaſt the Teachers and Guides of that Church ſhould be ſenſible of it. Why, they are ſo, and afraid the people ſhould be ſo too; And therefore in their ordinary *Catechiſms* and *Manuals* of Devotion, they leave out the *Second Commandment*, and divide the *Tenth* into two to make up the number, leſt if the common people ſhould know it, their Conſciences ſhould ſtart at the doing of a thing, ſo directly contrary to the plain Command of God.

4. THE worſhipping of the *Bread* and *Wine* in the Euchariſt, out of a falſe and groundleſs perſwaſion, *that they are ſubſtantially changed into the Body and*

Bloud of Chriſt. Which if it be not true, (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the moſt incredible things in the whole world) then, by the confeſſion of ſeveral of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *groſs Idolatry.*

5. THE worſhip and Invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the Virgin *Mary*, which hath now for ſome Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may juſtly wonder that ſo conſiderable a part of Religion, as they make this to be, ſhould have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where ſpeak one word concerning the worſhipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occaſions to reſtrain all extravagant apprehenſions and imaginations concerning the Honour due to Her, as foreſeeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his Mother and Brethren were without: *Who* (ſays he) *are my Mother and my Brethren? He that doth the will of my Father, the ſame is my Mother, and Siſter, and Brother.* And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the bleſſed Mother of our Lord

Lord; *Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee ſuck!* Our Saviour diverts it to another thing; *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* Does either our Saviour or his Apoſtles in all their Precepts and Directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to addreſs our ſelves to God, give the leaſt intimation of Prayer to the Virgin *Mary*, or making uſe of her Mediation? And can any man believe, that if this had been the *Practice* of the Church from the beginning, our *Saviour* and his Apoſtles would have been ſo ſilent about ſo conſiderable a part of Religion? Inſomuch, that in all the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles I do not remember that her Name is ſo much as once mentioned? And yet the worſhip of her in the Church of *Rome* is a main part of their Publick Worſhip; yea and of their Private Devotion too, in which it is uſual with them to ſay *ten Ave Maries* for *one Pater Noſter*, that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God, they make ten addreſſes to the bleſſed Virgin, for that is the proportion obſerved in their Roſaries. He that conſiders *this*, and had never ſeen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think, that there had

been more ſaid concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*, or our bleſſed *Saviour*; and that the New-Teſtament were full from one end to the other of Precepts and Exhortations to the worſhipping of her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to ſhew me, ſo much as one ſentence in the whole Bible that ſounds that way. And there is as little in the Chriſtian Writers of the firſt Three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among ſome Superſtitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*; And I remember particularly, that *Epiphanius*, who lived about that time, calls it, the *Hereſie of the Women*.

And thus I have given you ſome Inſtances of ſeveral *Doctrines* and *Practices*, which the Church of *Rome* have Built upon the Foundation of *Chriſtianity*. Much more might have been ſaid of them; but from what hath been ſaid, any man may eaſily diſcern how dangerous they are to the Salvation of men.

I proceed now in the Second place.

II. TO conſider whether our granting *a poſſibility of Salvation*, though with great

great hazard, to thoſe in the Communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a ſufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to conſider this, becauſe this is the great *popular Argument*, wherewith the Emiſſaries and Agents of that Church are wont to aſſault our people. *Your Church* (ſay they) *grants that a Papiſt may be Saved; Ours deny that a* Proteſtant *can be Saved; therefore it is ſafeſt to be of our* Church, *in which Salvation, by the acknowledgement of both ſides, is poſſible.*

For anſwer to this, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that this is ſo far from being *a good Argument*, that it is ſo intolerable *weak* and *ſophiſtical*, that any conſiderate man ought to be aſhamed to be catch'd by it. For either it is good of it ſelf, and ſufficient to perſwade a man to relinquiſh our Church, and to paſs over to theirs, without entring into the Merits of the Cauſe on either ſide, and without comparing the Doctrines and Practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not ſufficient *of it ſelf* to perſwade a man to leave our Church, without Comparing the Doctrines on both ſides, then

it is to no purpoſe, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of Doctrines, the one appear to be *true*, and the other *falſe*, this alone is ſufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true Doctrine is found, and then there is no need of this Argument.

If it be ſaid, that this Argument is good in it ſelf, without the examination of the Doctrines of both Churches; this ſeems a very ſtrange thing for any man to affirm, that it is reaſon enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her Doctrines and Practices be, if ſhe do but damn thoſe that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow *a poſſibility of Salvation* in her Communion.

But they who uſe this Argument, pretend that it is Sufficient of it ſelf; and therefore I ſhall apply my ſelf to ſhew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miſerable *weakneſs* and *inſufficiency* of it, to ſatisfie any mans Conſcience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I ſhall,

1 Shew the weakneſs of the *Principle* upon which this Argument relies.

2. Give ſome *parallel Inſtances by* which it will clearly apear that it concludes falſe.

3. I ſhall take notice of ſome *groſs abſurdities* that follow from it.

4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon *thoſe* to whom it is propounded. And

5. How improper it is to be urged by thoſe that make uſe of it.

1. I SHALL ſhew the *weakneſs* of the *Principle* upon which this Argument relies. And that is this: *That whatever different Parties in Religion agree in is ſafeſt to be choſen.* The true conſequence of which Principle, if it be driven to the head, is, to perſwade men to forſake Chriſtianity, and to make them take up in the Principles of *Natural Religion*, for in theſe all Religions do agree. For if this Principle be true, and ſignifie any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the ſeveral parties in Religion differ; becauſe that only is Safe and Prudent to be choſen wherein *all* agree. So that this Argument, if the Foundation of it be good, will perſwade further than thoſe who make uſe of it deſire it ſhould do; for it will not only make men forſake the *Proteſtant Religion*,

but *Popery* too, and, which is much more considerable, *Christianity* it self.

2. I WILL give some *parallel Instances*, by which it will clearly be seen that this Argument concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the Baptism of the Catholicks to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledged the Baptism of the *Donatists* to be valid. So that both sides were agreed that the Baptism of the *Donatists* was good; therefore the safest way for St. *Austin* and other *Catholicks* (according to this Argument) was to be Baptized again by the *Donatists*, because by the acknowledgment of both sides, Baptism among them was valid.

But, to come nearer to the Church of *Rome*. Several in that Church hold *the personal Infallibility of the Pope, and the lawfulness of deposing and killing Kings for Heresie*, to be *de fide*, that is, necessary Articles of Faith, and consequently, that whoever does not believe them, cannot be Saved. But a great many *Papists*, though they believe these things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think those that hold them may be Saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this Argument,

gument, they ought all to be of their opinion in theſe points, becauſe both ſides are agreed, that *they that hold them may be Saved*; but one ſide poſitively ſayes, that *men cannot be Saved if they do not hold them.*

But my Text furniſheth me with as good an Inſtance to this purpoſe as can be deſired. St. *Paul* here in the Text, acknowledgeth the *poſſibility* of the *Salvation* of thoſe, *who Built Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity*; *that they might be Saved*, though with great difficulty, and, as it were, *out of the Fire.* But now among thoſe Builders with Hay and Stubble, there were thoſe who denied the poſſibility of St. *Paul*'s Salvation, and of thoſe who were of his mind. We are told of ſome who Built the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies and Obſervances upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity, and ſaid, that unleſs men were Circumciſed and kept the Law of *Moſes*, they could not be Saved. So that by this Argument St. *Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to thoſe *Judaizing Chriſtians*, becauſe it was acknowledged on both ſides, that they might be Saved: But theſe *Judaizing Chriſtians* were as uncharitable to St. *Paul* and other Chriſtians,

as

as the Church of *Rome* is now to us; for they ſaid poſitively that they could not be Saved. But can any man think, that St. *Paul* would have been moved by this Argument, to leave a ſafe and certain way of Salvation, for that which was only poſſible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The Argument, you ſee is the very ſame, and yet it concludes the wrong way; which plainly ſhews, that it is a *contingent Argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therfore no man ought to be moved by it.

3. I SHALL take notice of ſome *groſs abſurdities* that follow from it. I ſhall mention but theſe two.

1. According to this Principle, it is always ſafeſt to be on the *uncharitable ſide*. And yet uncharitableneſs is as bad an evidence, either of a true Chriſtian, or a true Church, as a man would wiſh. *Charity* is one of the moſt Eſſential marks of Chriſtianity, and what the Apoſtle ſaith of particular Chriſtians, is as true of whole Churches; that *though they have all Faith, yet if they have not Charity, they are nothing.*

I grant that no Charity teacheth men to ſee others Damned, and not to tell them

them the danger of their condition. But it is to be consider'd, that the damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore when ever we do it, the case must be wonderfully plain. And is it so in this case? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny, but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour and his Apostles; what ever is contain'd in the Apostles Creed, and determined by the Four first General Councils; And yet they will not allow this, and a good Life, to put us within a possibility of Salvation; because we will not submit to all the Innovasions they would impose upon us. And yet I think there is scarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice*, in difference between them and us, which some or other of their most learned Writers have not acknowledged, either not to be sufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practised by the Primitive Church; so that nothing can excuse their uncharitablness towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this Argument; for they do what in them lies, to make themselves no Christians, that they may prove themselves the truer Church; A *medium* which we do not desire to make use of.

2. If

2. If this Argument were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the World to agree with him in an Error, which another does not acccount Damnable, whatever it be; provided he do but damn all thoſe that do not hold it; and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableneſs* to do this. But is there any ſenſe, that another mans boldneſs and want of Charity ſhould be an Argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illuſtrate this better, than by the difference between a skilful Phyſician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and *skilful Phyſician* is modeſt, and ſpeaks *juſtly* of things: He ſayes that ſuch a method of Cure which he hath directed is ſafe, and withal, that that which the Mountebank preſcribes, may poſſibly do the work; but there is great hazard and danger in it. But the *Mountebank* who never talks of anything leſs than *Infallible Cures* (and always the more Mountebank, the ſtronger pretence to Infallibility) he is *poſitive* that that Method which the Phyſician preſcribes will deſtroy the Patient, but his Receipt is Infallible, and never fails. Is there any reaſon in this caſe, that this man ſhould carry it, meerly by his *confidence*? And yet if this Argument

gument be good, the ſafeſt way is to reject the Phyſicians advice, and to ſtick to the Mountebanks; For both ſides are agreed, that there is a poſſibility of Cure in the Mountebanks method, but not in the Phyſicians; and ſo the whole force of the Argument lies in the *confidence* of an *ignorant man.*

4. THIS Argument is very unfit to work upon *thoſe* to whom it is propounded: For either they believe we ſay true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reaſon to be moved by what we ſay. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we ſay in this matter? Namely, that though it be poſſible for ſome in the Communion of the *Roman* Church to be ſaved, yet it is very hazardous; and that they are in a ſafe condition already in our Church; and why then ſhould *a bare poſſibility*, accompani'd with infinit and apparent hazard, be an Argument to any man to run into that danger?

LASTLY. This Argument is very improper to be urged by thoſe who make uſe of it. Part of the ſtrength of it lies in this, that we *Proteſtants* acknowledge that *it is poſſible a Papiſt may be Saved.*

But

But why ſhould they lay any ſtreſs upon this? What matter is it, what we Hereticks ſay, who are ſo Damnably miſtaken in all other things? Methinks, if there were no other reaſon, yet becauſe we ſay it, it ſhould ſeem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive, when it ſerves for their purpoſe, we have ſome little Credit and Authority among them.

BY this time I hope every one is in ſome meaſure ſatisfied of the *weakneſs of this Argument*, which is ſo tranſparent, that no wiſe man can honeſtly uſe it, and he muſt have a very odd Underſtanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is *a caſual and contingent Argument*, and ſometimes it concludes right, and oftner wrong: and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one caſe; when all things are ſo equal on both ſides, that there is nothing elſe in the whole World to determine him; which ſurely can never happen in matters of Religion neceſſarily to be believed. No man is ſo weak, as not to conſider in the change of his Religion, the *merits* of the *Cauſe it ſelf*; to examine the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of the Churches

on

on both ſides; to take notice of the *confidence* and *charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conſciencious and a prudent man. And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either ſide, then this Argument is needleſs, and comes too late, becauſe the work is already done without it,

Beſides, that the great hazard of Salvation in the *Roman* Church, (which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines* and *Practices* which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged poſſibility of Salvation in it, ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it: Never did any Chriſtian Church build ſo much Hay and Stuble upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity; and therefore *thoſe that are Saved in it, muſt be Saved*, as it were, *out of the Fire*. And though *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well ſuited to their manner of Building; for there is need of an *Ignis Purgatorius*, of a Fire to try their work, what it is, and to Burn up their Hay and Stubble. And I have ſo much Charity (and I deſire always to have it) as to hope, that a great many among them

them who live piouſly, and have been almoſt inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of Education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general Repentance* find mercy with God; and though their work ſuffer loſs and be Burnt, yet *they themſelves may eſcape as out of the Fire.* But as for thoſe who have had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the Truth, if they continue in the Errors of that Church, or Apoſtatize from the Truth, I think their condition ſo far from being Safe, that there muſt be extraordinary favourable circumſtances in their caſe to give a man hopes of their Salvation.

I have now done with the Two things I propounded to ſpeak to. And I am ſorry that the *neceſſary defence* of our Religion, againſt the *reſtleſs importunities* and *attempts* of its Adverſaries upon all ſorts of perſons, hath engaged me to ſpend ſo much time in matters of Diſpute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witneſſes, that I have conſtantly made it my buſineſs, in this Great Preſence and Aſſembly, to plead againſt the *Impieties* and *Wickedneſs* of men; and have endeavour'd, by the beſt Arguments I could

think

think of, to gain men over to a *firm belief*, and *ſerious practice* of the main things of Religion. And, I do aſſure you, I had much rather perſwade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or Denomination of Chriſtians whatſoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the Ancient Creed*, without the addition of any other Articles, *together with a good Life, will certainly Save a man*; and without this no man can have reaſonable hopes of Salvation, no not in an Infallible Church, if there were any ſuch to be found in the World.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent obſerver of the *Genius* and Humour of the ſeveral Sects and Profeſſions in Religion. And upon the whole matter, I do in my conſcience believe the Church of *England* to be the beſt conſtituted Church this day in the World; and that, as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worſhip* of it, are excellently framed to make men *ſoberly Religious*: Securing men on the one hand from the wild freaks of *Enthuſiaſm*; and on the other, from the groſs follies of *Superſtition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above ſeveral Profeſſions that we know

in the World, that it acknowledgeth a due and juſt Subordination to the *Civil Authority*, and hath alwayes been untainted in its *Loyalty*.

And now ſhall every trifling conſideration be ſufficient to move a man to relinquiſh ſuch a Church? There is no greater diſparagement to a mans Underſtanding, no greater Argument of a light and ungenerous Mind, than raſhly to change ones Religion. *Religion* is our greateſt concernment of all other, and it is not every *little Argument*, no nor a great noiſe about *Infallibility*, nothing but very *plain* and *convincing evidence*, that ſhould ſway a man in this caſe. But they are utterly inexcuſable, who make a change of ſuch concernment upon the inſinuations of one ſide only, without ever hearing what can be ſaid for the Church they were Baptized and brought up in, before they leave it. They that can yield thus eaſily to the Impreſſions of every one that hath a deſign and intereſt to make *Proſelytes*, may at this rate of diſcretion change their *Religion* twice a-day, and inſtead of *Morning* and *Evening Prayer*, they may have a *Morning* and an *Evening Religion*.

There-

Therefore, for Gods ſake, and for our own Souls ſake, and for the ſake of our Reputation, let us conſider and *ſhew our ſelves men*; Let us not ſuffer our ſelves to be ſhaken and carried away with every wind; Let us not run our ſelves into danger when we may be ſafe. Let us ſtick to the *Foundation* of *Religion*, the *Articles* of our *Common belief*, and Build upon them Gold, and Silver, and precious Stones, I mean, the *vertues and actions of a good Life*; and if we would do this, we ſhould not be apt to ſet ſuch a value upon *Hay* and *Stuble*. If we would ſincerely endeavour, to live *holy and vertuous lives*, we ſhould not need to caſt about for a *Religion*, which may furniſh us with eaſie and indirect ways to get to Heaven.

I WILL conclude all with the Apoſtles Exhortation. *Wherefore my beloved Brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, alwayes abounding in the work of the Lord.*

NOW *the God of peace which brought again from the Dead our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *the great Shepherd of the Sheep, by the Bloud of the Everlaſting Covenant,*

make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, *to whom be Glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

THE END